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ABSTRACT

The professional counselor of the future will be to a large extent a trainer and supervisor of others, including both junior staff and clients themselves. The counselor will serve broadly within the institution as a facilitator and even goader of desirable change. Because institutions (schools, colleges, agencies, prisons, hospitals, old age residences, etc.) may not welcome such internal subversives on their staffs, counselors may have to be employed by semi-autonomous "authorities" such as those that operate public transportation facilities. To function at that level, counselors will be prepared in selective, full-time, two-year programs that include a real internship. On the job they will participate in weekly staff conferences and monthly workshops or other inservice training activities. The counselor of the future will be undergirded by a much more useful body of research than now exists. Instead of microscopic laboratory studies of little or no practical significance, there will be field studies with less stress on precision and more on meaningful information and insights. Finally, conventions, publications, and the governance of associations will change drastically in the direction of making better use of what is known about effective communications and effective decision-making. (Author)

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A VIEW OF THE COUNSELOR'S FUTURE

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I envision counselors of the future (and I mean to use the word "counselor" in its broadest sense) spending most of their time doing important professional things, whether these be working with individuals with problems, conducting groups of various kinds, or consulting with staff in the institutions they work in and with people in the community. Whatever they do, they will do thoroughly and effectively. They will spend little or no time complaining that they can't do real counseling because they are kept so busy with clerical chores and trivia; instead, they will have found ways to avoid wasting their time on such chores and trivia.

Different counselors will specialize in different functions because, even though all will be well prepared as generalists, they will recognize that no one counselor, not even the counselor who has spent two years of full-time intensive study including a real internship, can do a really top-notch job in all the areas of career development, personal development, consultation, remedial counseling, pre-college counseling, setting up a testing program and doing a thoroughly knowledgeable and expert job of interpreting and applying the results, utilizing computers for information, decision-making, and whatever else they can do, etc., etc., etc. So there will be specializations for counselors, just as there are for nurses, physicians, lawyers, and others in important professions. There will, however, be general practitioners among counselors and they will be able to do the basic things with solid competence and will know quite a lot even about the things that need a specialist for some applications and situations.

I see tomorrow's counselor as being somewhat different from today's counselors in temperament and even personality. Tomorrow's counselor will be a much more aggressive person, one who takes the initiative much more often in searching out needs and developing programs to meet those needs. The counselor will be much more an actor, less a reactor. That counselor will not spend much time in a quiet counseling room but will be out in the building and out in the community, will be a facilitator, a goader, and a humanizer -- to everybody. Without taking sides, this counselor will try to help everybody to function more effectively, to communicate and problem-solve. And this counselor will spend as much time and energy trying to change environments as trying to change people -- maybe more.

This counselor will be a supervisor and trainer for much of the work week -- teaching aides, peers, and everybody in the place to do their own problem-solving

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and their own counseling. We will give counseling away to everybody we can, rather than guarding our secret knowledge and techniques. That, by the way, is one of the ways we will have managed to get rid of those chores and trivia -- by assigning them to people for whom they are appropriate, people who will enjoy them and will probably do them better than we. Thus we will be permitted, and indeed compelled, to spend our time doing the professional things for which we have been trained and are being paid to do.

I see this counselor spending hours every week in her or his own professional development. Part of this will be done in a half-day a week of staff meetings and conferences where the agenda consists mainly of professional rather than administrative topics. Most of the remainder of it will be done in frequent conferences with one's supervisor and in frequent (at least monthly) attendance at continuing education workshops, seminars, demonstrations, etc.

This means that there will be supervisors -- helping supervisors rather than people who are mostly evaluators and administrators. There will be a supervisor for so many counselors, and it will be regarded as an unethical practice for a counselor to work unsupervised. Again, I mean frequent (at least weekly) active supervision of a teaching and helping nature.

I see this counselor functioning in many corners of society that are now almost not reached by us -- in prisons, old-age residences and institutions, with the poor and blue collar workers, in labor unions, in industry, in general hospitals, and in specialized hospitals for people with mental and emotional problems or inadequacies. The counselors will not be junior- or pseudo-therapists in these settings, but counselors, helping people who are trying to function at some stage or in some area of living, helping them to make the most of what they've got, to cope more effectively, and to plan for the next step in their lives, and at the same time helping and prodding the institutions to change so as to be more productive to society and to the people they specifically are dealing with.

At last year's APGA Convention, at the opening session of Institute 75, we heard people from outside our field tell us that we were neglecting women, the incarcerated, the children of the poor, and the blue-collar worker. In the future we shall be much more alert to unmet needs, and we shall move much faster than we do today to devise ways to meet those needs. Society is paying an immense price for this neglect, a price in terms of crime, misery, wasted human potentialities, and lots of money to keep applying emergency treatment to people who are not getting any better because their basic problems and needs are not being attended to.

One big question is whether society, through all these institutions, is going to hire us to be goaders, searchers-out of evils and problems, facilitators, environment-changers, and people-changers. The answer may be no, but it is more likely to be yes if at least we can demonstrate that we really bring expertise and really make things happen. That is the very least we should do.

But even so, there is some real doubt as to whether schools, colleges, hospitals, prisons, old age homes, and other institutions will hire people who will frequently be trouble-makers to those in charge. Is it realistic to expect that very many social institutions will hire internal subversives -- people who are in part devoted to questioning and changing the status quo? Maybe not.

Maybe counselors will have to be employed independently of these institutions, employed perhaps by semi-autonomous agencies such as the authorities that governments sometimes set up to build and operate bridges and tunnels and public transportation projects.

I was interested that Betty Knox took the position in an editorial in the November 1974 School Counselor that school counselors would function better if they worked out of district or even system-wide offices, where they might function more professionally and freer of the undesirable effects of being under the direct supervision of building principals. This might seem to be a reversal of many years of progress in getting counselors to be full-time staff members of one school. Yet it now appears that individual schools are often not a place where counselors can play the kinds of roles we as a profession have described in our various statements. This is true also of many colleges and employment offices and certainly of prisons. We will have to find a way that counselors can work in these places and yet maintain some degree of independence and autonomy. I don't know whether this problem is solvable, if not, it may turn out that we'll have a lot of private practitioners and independent consultants as the only ways to fulfill our mission as we define it in our role descriptions and our etical codes.

TRAINING OF COUNSELORS

How will these paragons be trained and educated? The only way I know is to do it seriously and intensively and with the expenditure of time and money. I see tomorrow's counselor being trained at least as well as today's social worker. That means something like two years with a full-time commitment, and with a very generous amount of time devoted to supervised experience in real-life settings -- schools, colleges, rehab agencies, community counseling centers, employment offices, prisons, etc. The field experience would be in full working days, enough of them so that the graduating counselor will have had the equivalent of at least a half-year of full-time experience, intensively supervised by people from both the field site and training institution.

There will be more than one model for the training programs. Some will be traditional programs where students take a number of classroom courses, maybe even before they have any experience. My own preference is for a program that starts with the closest possible thing to real experience in real settings from the first day on, and that does all its teaching around that experience. It's a hard way to teach but for me far superior in meaningfulness of what is being taught and what is being experienced. In fact, I think that the most meaningful kind of pro ram might even be based primarily in the field.

Tomorrow's counselor will not be given the training institution's, or anybody's, stamp of competence, until that counselor really is ready to start working -- ready in terms of knowledge, skill, attitudes, and personality. Whoever does the training -- whether a university, a separate professional school, or a consortium made up of the employers of counselors, universities, and perhaps others -- will not be permitted to give the key to the city to people they know are not ready to be responsible, ethical, and effective practitioners. I feel confident that we know how to identify most such people at the time of admission to graduate study and how to recognize the others soon after. We will recognize these errors and not permit them to continue.

And somebody -- maybe a consortium, but here too there will be more than one pattern or model -- somebody will conduct a variety of continuing education activities, where counselors will come at least once a month for retooling, refreshing, updating, and renewing.

We will all -- employers, state education departments, professional associations, and universities -- have to make it possible for all that to happen. It will require money, and it will require a degree of professional commitment on everybody's part. It will mean that we regard our work as important as that of the physician, engineer, or anybody else, and that we recognize that doing it well requires a high order of knowledge and skill.

RESEARCH

There will be radical changes in the kind of research that is done in our field. Right now research is a pretty forbidding topic to most practitioners in our field. Not only do few practitioners ever do any research (and this, by the way, is true even at the doctoral level), but it is probably true that few of them ever read any research. And I can't blame them. Most of the research that is published in journals and technical reports not only is forbidding and dull reading, and beyond the full comprehension of most of us, but, even worse, it is next to worthless.

Somewhere along the way we began to march to the wrong research drummer, to follow the wrong research piper. These were drummers and pipers who had their eyes on chemistry and physics as models of what research should be; to this day many psychologists and educators still have their eyes on those models, models that may be appropriate for chemists and physicists but surely not for people studying human behavior and human interactions. We have gone merrily on our way, filling more and more pages of more and more journals with studies that get more and more microscopic, more and more obsessed with the fine points of statistics and experimental design, and that less and less ask meaningful questions about people and certainly provide less and less information or insight that helps us to help those people.

In future years we will turn things around, and we will say once again that research is an enterprise that is aimed at learning things and understanding things better, using whatever methods do that, rather than being an exercise in technical virtuosity. We will face up to the fact that most of the things we as counselors need to learn about people and institutions just are not matters of great precision, and that we might as well abandon, for the most part, these precise methods. An intelligent and knowledgeable observer can, by looking and listening and asking, see and hear most of what is worth knowing, and then can record and interpret those observations. The so-called instruments and the elaborate statistical treatment of the numbers that emerge from those instruments are, with rare exceptions, not worth the trouble.

I see tomorrow's researcher being, in many instances, a practitioner, one who has learned to do relatively simple studies and who does them as part of the job. I mean studies that require systematic observations, that ask people questions, that follow up former clients, that help to gain insights into the people we work with, and that help us to evaluate the effectiveness of our work.

Even doctoral students will be urged to study matters of importance rather than just matters of statistical significance. Their professors will not force them to jump through technical hoops but will share with their students the wisdom that, when dealing with the intangibles of human activities and feelings, the intelligent mind of the seeker of knowledge is often more useful than pseudo-refinements of instruments and esoteric statistical techniques. It will even be OK for doctoral students to do action research, to make things happen, and show that they happened, even if they don't produce analyses of variance and correlations carried out to four decimal points to show that something did happen.

Journal editors and editorial board reviewers will share this wisdom and, as one of their major criteria for evaluating research reports, will ask the question: did this study ask questions that have any importance in our lives and work, and does it say anything that will make any difference in anybody's life? Tomorrow's research journals may well be fewer in number and thinner. And the people who now fill those pages with trivia and meaningless numbers and jargon will find more useful ways to fill their work week and other ways to collect trading stamps for tenure and promotion and better jobs.

Many of the studies that practitioners will conduct will not be published, and should not be, because they will be mainly of local interest, maybe to be shared with colleagues and others in one's own institution and perhaps neighboring institutions. If we look at research as this kind of activity, maybe it will be less forbidding and there will be a lot more of it done. Counselors will be more ready to take a chance, act on a hunch, try something new and see what happens; that's research, or at least it can be if one sets it up systematically.

Certainly the esoteric, deeply theoretical people should be free to do their esoterica. But let's not burden the applied people with that as something they are expected to read or do themselves in order to get an advanced degree or to collect those trading stamps. Personally, I doubt that the highly technical research is going to accomplish much more in the future than it has in the past (and this, by the way, is true in psychology and education in general, and not just in counseling) but I certainly don't want to get in their way; I just want them to stay out of mine.

CONVENTIONS, PUBLICATIONS, ASSOCIATIONS

There are lots of changes ahead of us in the way we communicate with each other and join together as professionals. Our conventions have changed hardly at all for decades; they are a terribly ineffective way to do anything except maybe get us out of our own backyards for a few days and get a little stimulation and refreshment. Those are important outcomes, but they really are not enough to justify all the work and money and energy that goes into them.

In the future we will use the expertise about communications that exists in our ranks to design methods by which we can talk to each other, experience new ideas in meaningful ways, and leave a session and a convention with a feeling that we are taking back something worth all that time and energy and money. We had one example of such an improved method at last year's convention in Institute 75, but it was a one-time effort and wasn't followed up during the

year or developed further at this year's convention. It's hard work to do things differently and requires imagination, flexibility, financial support, and risk-taking, and it gets harder every year as we grow in numbers. But there has to be something better than the game of looking through 60 or 70 program listings at any one period of time and trying to guess which one you can get into and will get something out of. We've learned a lot about communications and about setting up growth and learning activities for our clients and students, activities where they are actively engaged in the process. We surely can figure out ways to practice what we preach when we hold our own conferences. By the use of preconvention materials, video and audio techniques, combinations of small and large group activities, and with a heavy dose of active and interactive processes, we will make much better use of our convention time. It will mean a much more rigorous process of planning and of screening proposals for programs, and we just won't let ourselves get away with writing papers on the airplane coming in or planning our panel discussions fifteen minutes before they are scheduled to begin. It won't be easy, but we can run things a lot better once we make up our minds that we want to.

And there have to be better ways for our professional associations to accomplish things than the way they do now. We will in the future develop ways of really knowing important things about the people we elect as officers -- not only their ideas but how they function as leaders. We will give our Presidents a real chance to accomplish something, by electing them for at least two if not three year terms, so that they can plan their budgets and set up their committees and have the time and wherewithal to follow through on their visions. And we won't have committees that go on year after year accomplishing nothing and feeling frustrated. Instead we'll have mostly task forces that are set up to do a job within a defined period. At the end of that period they will be thanked for their accomplishments and given a new task or terminated if either they haven't done their job or if there isn't another specific task for them to take on.

We'll also find ways for our policy-making and decision-making bodies within the Association to meet often enough and with effective working processes, so that they can really thresh out issues and act decisively on them. This will require more time to APGA business on the part of our Senators and Board of Directors, but it will have to happen if they are to play the parts that are expected of them.

Finally, we will see a much wider variety of published materials being produced. Instead of every new division feeling that it must publish a journal in order to be a self-respecting division, we will have found out through careful consumer studies what our profession needs in the way of information and ideas and will have an array of newsletters, yearbooks, research reports, magazines, and audio and video materials to meet those needs. Each article or item or whatever will be produced and disseminated because it has a specific purpose to accomplish, and the consumer will reign supreme. I suspect that the array of materials will not much resemble today's journals, either in their contents or in the ways in which the contents are presented and distributed.

CONCLUSION

There will be many other changes, the end result of which will be that counselors will know a lot better than they do today who they are and what they do for society. And society will know a lot better who we are and what we do, and will value highly what we have to offer.

We will have to be careful as we become a more stable, less transient profession, that we do not become more rigid and status-conscious and self-serving. If we can manage all that, we will have accomplished what few fields have accomplished. There is no profession that is potentially more important to a changing society. If we can swing it, we will not only make great contributions but will also serve as a magnificent model for others.